

Remarks/Arguments:

Claims 1-8 are pending in the application and are rejected. Claims 1-5 and 8 have been amended.

On page 2, the Official Action rejects claim 8 under 35 U.S.C. § 101 as not falling within one of the four statutory categories of invention. Thus, Applicants have amended claim 8 to include a plurality of **filters** in the frequency analysis step. Support for the **filter** is at least found in Applicants' paragraph 51 (*"the time signal having been input to the frequency analyzing section 103 may be divided into time signals of two or more frequency bands by using FIR ... band-pass filters or IIR band-pass filters"*). Thus, the frequency analysis step of claim 8 now recites a plurality of filters that divide the time signal until a plurality of frequency band signals. Withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

On page 2, the Official Action rejects claims 1-8 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. Specifically, the Official Action states that the recitation of "time progression of the level" is not clear. Applicants' representatives proposed the recitation of "a time period defining a time progression" during the telephone interview on February 19, 2009. After reviewing the proposal, the Examiner agreed that the 112 rejection would be withdrawn. Support for the time progression can be at least found in Applicants' Fig. 3 and paragraph 36 (*"as shown in Fig. 3, an interval between the rising edge of the signal in the time direction is represented as period T of the time progression of the level"*). Simply stated, the time progression of the signal is the signal's level during a period of time T. Withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

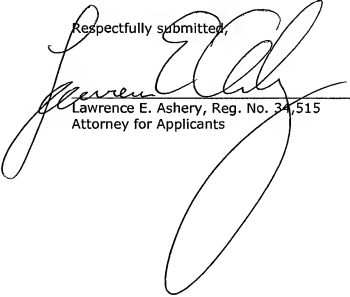
Applicants have added a "wherein clause" to both independent claims 1 and 8. The "wherein clause" describes the operation of the howling deciding section 107 as shown in Fig. 2. The howling deciding section 107 finally decides that howling occurs when the howling detecting section 105 decides that howling occurs **and** the periodic signal detecting section 106 does not detect periodicity. This feature is at least supported in Applicants' specification paragraph 48. No new matter has been added.

Application No.: 10/589,843
Amendment Dated: March 5, 2009
Reply to Office Action of: December 9, 2008

KAN-111US

In view of the amendments and arguments set forth above, the above-identified application is in condition for allowance, which action is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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Dated: March 5, 2009

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SO_381980